

The Humane Diet Leaflets.

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13. *Conservative Cookery.*

BY MARGARET BLATCH.

IT is well-known that vegetables contain natural mineral salts and mild acids, which are of vital importance to the blood, to the necessary functions of the body and our general well-being. We should therefore use the best means in our power to retain these valuable elements in the cooking of our vegetables.

It is obvious that the more water we use in the process the more we shall draw out the flavour and the salts and acids. The exception which is made in the use of tea shows very clearly what takes place. No one in this case thinks of throwing away the water and eating the leaves, which is what is done in much of the cooking of vegetables.

The conservative method, then, is the method which, as the term applies, aims at conserving or keeping the valuable properties in the vegetables instead of throwing them away.

If the water in which vegetables are boiled, is saved and used as stocks for soups and sauces, then we are giving back to a certain extent that which we have previously extracted. But it is not always convenient or advisable to trust to this method. The wiser plan is to use as little water as possible, or better still, the vegetables may be steamed or stewed, when they will retain every particle of the mineral salts.

In the case of pulse foods, macaronis and rice, the necessary quantity of water should be ascertained from the *Conservative Cookery Book* recipes or by personal experiment.

Spinach and cabbage may be cooked without any water at all, with the addition of a small piece of butter, and most vegetables, with the exception of cauliflowers and one or two others, lend themselves to this conservative cookery. Cauliflower water can always be used as stock, and is one of the finest and most tasty foundations for soups.

With cauliflowers, Brussel Sprouts, peas and beans, a little water is advisable at starting, and with carrots, turnips and beetroots a little milk in the jar is good.

It may be noted that vegetables take a good deal longer to cook by this method.

An apple slowly baked, a potato simmered or steamed in its jacket, are trusty examples of true Conservative Cookery. Here no part of the ingredient is pared away beforehand and nothing is soaked or boiled out in the cooking. Hence the flavour, digestibility and food value of such simply cooked dishes.

In Conservative Cookery there should seldom be any mixing of full-flavoured ingredients. Two or more practically flavourless foodstuffs may often with advantage be mixed with one of fuller flavour, so long as the flavour of the best ingredient is clearly recognisable in the resultant dish.

For such maturing of flavour slow and careful cooking is essential. The best vessels to use are, for the oven the earthenware casserole, and for the top of the stove the steamer or double-pan cooker. Those who have not a double cooker can use a large straight jam jar covered with a saucer and placed in a saucepan of boiling water. The slow cooking which such vessels ensure not only makes food more palatable and digestible, but the valuable vitamins present in many raw vegetables and fruits are not destroyed to the same extent as they are in ordinary cookery, where often excessive heat is needlessly employed. It is by attention to these principles that in Conservative Cookery we break away from the "herby" flavourings and the unwholesome mixtures common to ill-prepared dishes, and so make the best and most appetising use of our wide and varied range of vegetarian food-stuffs.

Spinach and Sorrel Soup.—Well wash and drain 1 lb. of spinach and 4 ozs. of sorrel, and put into an earthenware casserole with 2 oz. of nut margarine and 2 medium-sized onions finely chopped. Stir well for a few minutes, then leave to simmer for 20 minutes, add 1 tablespoonful of flour, 1 pint of water, 1 pint of milk, 1 dessert-spoonful of lemon juice, and a little salt if liked. Simmer the whole for 1 hour or more, pass through a wire sieve, re-heat, and serve with fried croutons.

Creamed Potatoes in their Jackets.—Well scrub, then bake or steam 3 large potatoes. When cooked, cut in halves lengthways, scoop out the centres and mix with the yolks of 2 eggs, 1 oz. of butter, salt and pepper if liked. Beat well together until creamy, then put the mixture back into the potato skins and bake until brown on top. Serve very hot. A little cheese may be added if liked.

Spinach Mould.—Well wash, drain and pick 2 lbs. of spinach, melt 2 oz. of nut margarine in a saucepan or casserole, put the spinach into this and stir occasionally until cooked, about 30 minutes; do not add any water. When quite soft, drain off the liquid and pass the spinach through a wire sieve, add 2 whole eggs, a little salt and



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lemon juice, 2 oz. of soft brown breadcrumbs. Put the whole into a greased mould and steam until set, about 1 hour. Add 1 dessertspoonful of flour to the liquid strained from spinach and stir over the fire until it thickens. Turn spinach mould on to a hot dish, pour the above sauce over it, serve very hot.

Rice and Cheese Croquettes.—Cook 6 oz. of rice in just sufficient water for the rice to absorb, add 4 oz. of grated cheese (very dry cheese is best), 4 oz. of soft breadcrumbs, 1 egg, 1 oz. of nut margarine, a little salt if liked. Form into croquette shapes, dip each in beaten egg, roll in breadcrumbs, and fry to a golden brown. Serve hot with tomato sauce and vegetables, or cold with salad.

Spring Vegetable Macedoine.—8 oz. of carrots, 8 oz. of turnips, 8 oz. of leeks, 4 oz. of spring onions, 8 oz. of green peas, 2 oz. of lettuce, and any other vegetable in season. Well wash the carrots and turnips and cut them into small dice; wash the leeks and spring onions and cut into rings; shred the lettuce. Melt 3 oz. of nut margarine in a saucepan, and put all the above into it except the peas; stir well for 10 minutes but do not brown; add 1 large tablespoonful of flour; stir well, then add slowly 1 pint of milk. Let the whole simmer for 1 hour, add the peas about 20 minutes before serving, add salt if required.

Braised Celery.—Wash and cut up 2 heads of celery. Melt 2 oz. of nut margarine in a casserole and put in the celery with 1 gill of water or vegetable stock. Put into a moderate oven or over small gas, and cook for about 1½ hours, stirring occasionally. Drain off the liquid and thicken with 1 dessertspoonful of flour. Put the celery into a well-heated vegetable dish and pour the sauce over it. Serve very hot.

Leeks, seakale, etc., can be cooked in the same way as celery, thus retaining all their juices.

Buttered Carrots.—Well scrub and finely shred 2 lbs. of carrots and put into a double-pan cooker with 2 oz. of nut margarine and 2 tablespoonfuls of water. Cook until tender, about 1 hour, and serve with the liquid poured over them.

Parsnips, green peas, French beans, cabbage, etc., can be cooked and served in the same way.

Baked Haricot Beans with Tomatoes.—Cook 6 oz. of haricot beans until quite soft. Slice 1 lb. of tomatoes and fry in 2 oz. of nut margarine for 10 minutes, add 2 tablespoonfuls of flour, stir well in, then add to the beans. Add salt and pepper to taste, and 1 small clove of garlic finely chopped. Put the whole into a pie dish, sprinkle with dried breadcrumbs, and bake for 1 hour.

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Butter Beans Soubise.—Cook 6 oz. of butter beans in slightly salted water until they are quite soft. Peel and slice 1 lb. of onions and fry in 3 oz. of nut margarine, but do not let them brown. Add 2 large tablespoonfuls of flour, then mix the whole with the butter beans, adding a little milk if too thick. Add salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 30 minutes and serve very hot.

Lentil and Onion Fritters.—Put 6 oz. of lentils into a saucepan and just cover with water, cook until quite mashed and nearly dry, adding a little more water from time to time if required. Finely chop 2 medium sized onions and fry in 2 oz. of nut margarine until brown, mix with the lentils, add 2 oz. of breadcrumbs, 1 egg, salt and pepper to taste, 1 dessertspoonful of lemon juice, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonful of marmite. Mix well together; the mixture should be fairly stiff. Drop pieces about the size of an egg into very hot fat and fry until brown. Serve with gravy and conservatively cooked vegetables.

Creamed Lentils au Gratin.—Cook 8 oz. of lentils in just sufficient water for the lentils to absorb, add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonful of marmite, 1 dessertspoonful of lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste, and 2 oz. of nut margarine. Beat the whole with a wooden spoon for about 5 minutes, put into a fireproof dish, sprinkle with half grated cheese and half breadcrumbs mixed together, and brown under the grill. Serve with gravy and conservatively cooked vegetables.

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